**Psalms of Advent:**

**A Sacrifice Of Thanksgiving**

**Psalm 50:1-15**

Mid-week Advent 2

12.08.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

When was the last time you made a sacrifice to God? What did you offer on the altar, a lamb, goat, or two doves? Was it a grain offering, a wave offering, a sin offering, or a thank offering? I doubt that any of you here have sacrificed any animals to God as a sin offering or wave offerings. I would also believe than none of you have offered a grain offering or a thank offering as outlined by the Levitical law. For that matter, I doubt that many of you could give me a definition of those sacrifices and explain when each is to be made.

The Israelites knew. The smell of the temple was like a slaughterhouse. Daily the sacrificial fires burned up the sacrifices brought by the people, sacrifices demanded by God’s Law.

Yes, the Israelites made their sacrifices, but their hearts were far from God. They did what was required, their outward actions in strict obedience to the demands of the Law. But it was a going through the motions, without any fear, love, or trust in God.

In this Psalm, God makes a two-fold truth clear. First, God takes no pleasure in animal sacrifices without the sacrifice of prayer. Or to say it another way, the ritual of sacrifice is not God-pleasing if the heart is far from God. Secondly, confessing the Word of God is meaningless if the life which follows is not lived according to that Word.

You know, it sounds like the same problems which Christ’s church has today. How often is the ritual of sitting in church and going through the liturgy just a repetitious motion that takes place with a detached demeanor? You know all the words and melodies, you can do them without thinking – without thinking about what they mean for you and your life.

Christ’s body and blood are present on the table. You come forward to receive the benefits of the sacrifice Christ made upon the cross. You eat and drink forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. But do you think about it before you get here? Do you really prepare, considering your sins in contrite repentance, coming forth ***expecting*** – ***deeply desiring*** – to receive forgiveness, life, and salvation?

During the prayers, as the words are spoken by the pastor, is your heart engaged? Do you ponder all the words and the people and places considered in the petitions? Or does your mind wander as pastor’s voice drones on through the prayers? “Will Rodger’s toe injury be a problem? Can the defense continue to hold it together? How can I swing buying that new X-box series X for the kids, they aren’t cheap?” And then the voice up front says, “Lord, in your mercy.” ... and you chime in, right on cue, “hear our prayer.” Even then your mind continues wandering, “I hope the mechanic figures out the problem, and that it isn’t the transmission that went out in the truck, another $1200 during Christmas, I can’t afford that? But who knows what you are asking God to hear, for you never heard it!

But that’s not all. You confess you are a Christian. You know what God’s Word says in regard to living your life in accordance with His will, but how is your life lived? According to that Word of God? Or have you taken that free forgiveness to heart, thinking you can do whatever you want, as long as you get to church once in a while to confess your sins and receive forgiveness?

Forgiveness is real. Forgiveness covers all sins. But consider this. Would you call the man wearing green and gold at Lambeau a Packer fan if you heard him cheering for the Bears when they come to town? Of course not! In the same way, can you claim to be a Christian and live your life in direct contradiction to God’s Word on a daily basis? Yes, you can make that claim, but are you?

God says in this Psalm, *“Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge! “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”*

God knows your heart. He knows whether your confession of faith is lived in your heart. He knows whether your sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving are the mere repetition of words, or the sincere meditation of your heart.

God does desire your confession of sins, for when you confess that you have not loved Him with your whole heart and not lived according to His will, you are confessing your faith in Him. In confessing your sins, you are trusting not in yourself, but in God.

You know what sacrifice is, for you know how Christ made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross. Christ gave His life to redeem you from sin. He made His sacrifice with you on His heart – as payment for those times you have gone through the motions without the full engagement of your heart.

He wants you to come to Him and offer your sacrifice of thanksgiving. Christ’s sacrifice is delivered to you. He comes to bring to you healing, forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, and to strengthen your faith. Receive Him with joy, believing that in Him you are forgiven. That dear friend, is your sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Yes, God desires that you love Him with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. He desires that you and love your neighbor as yourself. He desires that His Word is not only your Sunday morning thing, but your life 24/7 – 365.

But, God’s greatest desire for you is that you joyfully come into His presence to receive from Him what He desires to give you – with thanksgiving. The great sacrifice has been made, you need make no other – only raise up your heart in thanksgiving for what you receive from you God. He desires to give you all good things. He wants you to acknowledge and receive them with your whole hearts.

In only seventeen days we will again celebrate the birth of our Savior King, Jesus, God’s Christ. For twelve days will again raise our voices in the beloved Christmas songs and carols, a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the gift of a Savior.

In a couple moments, this sermon will end. Following it, we will raise our voices in song. That song is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, asking God to create in us a new and clean hearts, hearts full of the joy of the salvation He is even now delivering to us in His Word.

After we eat and drink of the meal Christ sets before of His body and blood, we will join Simeon in a sacrificial song of thanksgiving. We will raise our voices expressing the joy of having held the Christ with our tongue and supped of Him with our lips, unto life everlasting.

The sacrifices of thanksgiving are already here, you know them all very well. Now, join in them with your whole hearts. Amen.